

A PENNY

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POST:

OR, A

VINDICATION

OF THE

Liberty and Birthright

OF EVERY

ENGLISH-MAN,

IN

Carrying Merchants & other men's

Letters, against any restraint of Farmers of

such Employments.

By John Hill.



Printed in the Year 1659.

From the Library of the Late B. L. Newman Esq. & the late
Solicitor to the City of London. purchased at the
sale of his books by Sotheby & Co. July 19. 1835.

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LONDON.

Printed in the Year 1699.



A Penny-Post; or a Vindication of
the Liberty of every English-
man, in carrying Merchants and
other mens Letters, &c.

IN the Month of *August*, which was in the yeere
of our Lord 1642. upon complaint made to this
Parliament that certain persons were restrained
and imprisoned by certain Patentees, or their As-
signs, for the carrying of such Merchants, or o-
ther mens Letters as should employ them; thereupon it was re-
solved, That the taking of Letters from, and the restraints and
imprisonments of the persons then complaining, namely,
Grover, Chatman, and others, was against Law, Liberty, and
Freedom of the People; and that those persons ought to have
Reparations from *Cook* and *Windebancke*, Secretaries of State;
and that they were Delinquents for so doing, as by their Votes
may appear.

In *November* following, *Mr. Prideaux*, late Attorney
General, taking notice that the Parliament had thus honoura-
bly asserted the Liberties of the People, and punished Monopo-
lizers, writ to all the Post-Masters in England, That the Lords
and Commons concurred in vindicating the Rights and Liber-
ties

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ties of every person in this Nation: And that in prosecution of that Freedom, which was due to every English man, assumed the Liberty of carrying and recarrying of Letters by way of Posts, (which then had formerly been obstructed) and that if they should think fit to joyn with him out of the benefit accruing by such Employment, they might expect their Salaries, as by his Letters appear. Whereupon they forthwith complied, and continued to exact six pence for the carriage of every single Letter, till the latter end of the year 1652. that J. H. of the City of York; then an Attorney at Law, (when all provision for Horses was scarce and dear) contrived the placing of Horses in the Road between London and York, whereby any person that had occasion to travel, might be furnished with Horses and Furniture, at the rate of two pence for a Mile; & then also at the instance of the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and others of the City of York, Town of Hull, Newcastle, Durham, and other Corporations, having the approbation and encouragement from the greater part of the Officers of the Armies then in Scotland, and the Northern parts of this Nation, as appears under their hands, undertook the carrying of Letters and small Commodities, at the half rates, and less, then the same had at any time been carryed at, which tended much to the advantage and ease of the people, and taking to himself *Chas. Owenbridge* Esq; and others Partners, (they being much importuned by many Citizens of London, and most of the Corporations within this Nation, to communicate the like benefit into all the usual Roads in England and Scotland) settles the same not onely in the usual Roads, but also in several places where no Posts formerly went, notwithstanding the continual opposition of Mr. *Pridden* and his prevalent friends then of the Council of State, by whom he obtained several Orders to discourage the then proceedings; yet it being obvious as well by the Opinions of the Judges whom the Parliament consulted as to the point of restraint, as also by the Votes of Lords and Commons, That the People had Legal Right to the choice of their Agent for that employment, continued such carriage of Letters for one whole year, though to their great loss and damage. But soon

soon after they had letted the Thursday Post, which is continued to this day, the Parliament being then first interrupted in the year 1653: the Council of *Oliver*, then Lord Protector, let the carriage of Letters as well forreign as Inland, to a man who had neither spent money, nor taken pains in reducing the same, which caused a forcible restraint by Souldiers to be put upon the said Undertakers, and they compelled to desist from their lawful employment for the ease and benefit of the Nations, and to avoid such inconvenience as in probability would have followed by a contest at that time when the people were so highly, and (as conceived) justly discontented, that those who then assumed the Supreme Authority, having in the year 1642 as aforesaid, considered the restrictive Clauses in the late Kings Patent, granted in the 13. year of his Reign, against the Liberty and freedom of the People, although that Patent was *absque aliquo inde reddendo*) should infringe their Liberties in sending Letters by those who carryed at the lowest rate, and by whom they had received so much benefit) were content to sit still & wait till providence should make out an opportunity either by restoring the Parliament to that fullness and freedom of acting which was in the said year 1642. or till a full and free Parliament should be called, either of which as was not the least doubted but would vindicate the just Liberties of the people in this particular: And in regard it is evidently demonstrated as well by principal Merchants in London, as by Tradesmen in other Corporations, that the Rates now taken for single and double Letters together, (the Farmers assuming Liberty to rate all Letters above single, at their pleasures, and themselves or their mercenary Agents, Judges, whether a Letter be single or double) do amount to as much, if not exceed what was formerly taken by Mr. *Pridenoux* and his Agents, and at the fresh importunity of many thousand Citizens of London, as is testified by their Subscriptions, as also by the Grand Inquests of the Northern & other Counties, all of which apprehend, that its more equal such a sum (as in probability may be raised by farming the Inland Letters) might more legally and equally be raised, or otherwise added to the publique Tax; and being very confident that

that the Wisdom of this Parliament will not so far regard the wily insinuations of any man who desires to farm the same upon pretence that the State wants money, when his onely design is to enrich himself by the Nations prejudice; nor by such or any other, be drawn to lay a restraint upon the Nation in the choice of their Carriers of Letters, or any other Commodities whether small or great: The said Undertaker in the beginning of the last Month, made provision by setting most of the Northern Road with Horses and Agents for the carrying of Letters and small Commodities; but since his coming to town hath heard of a Resolve in Parliament, by which it is referred to the present Council of State to dispose thereof to the best advantage of the Commonwealth; by which some would understand that it's intended by the Parliament to let the same out to Farm for money, as formerly; though those that love and honour the Parliament, are far from harbouring such a thought either of the Parliament, or present Council of State; & therefore its intended, according to the Publication already extant, (if not restrained by Authority) to proceed in setting the rest of the Roads, in order to the carrying of Letters and Commodities at the Rates published, being a penny for England, two pence for Scotland, & four pence for Ireland, & 3. d. per Ounce for small commodities: And that all the Moneys accruing by the carriage of such Letters and small Commodities, shal be paid to such hands as shall be appointed; and that (after incident charges, together with a reasonable allowance for his pains, be deducted) the overplus (if any) be disposed for setting the poor on work in London, York, and the Countrey Corporations where such Posts are settled; and also, to give sufficient Security for the management hereof, (if required;) and likewise, to settle Horses in all the usual Roads, to carry men with their Guides at half the Rates of what is now taken, *v. z.* 3. d. per Mile, for both the Riders Horse and Guides; Not doubting but it will be conceived this way of lessening the Rates to be the best advantage of the Commonwealth.

Some, amongst many other Reasons that might be given, against the letting of carriage of Letters to Farm.

The Statute of 21. Jac. provides, That all Commissions, Grants, Licenses and Patents granted, or to be granted for working or using any thing, or of any other monopolies, shall be utterly void; and the wisdom and care of that Parliament in preserving the Peoples Rights against any monopolizing restraints in their lawful employments, is observable, the penalty being trebble damages, and double costs to the party grieved; and it must certainly be an offence against the Common Law, when it is so clearly against common Reason, Correspondency being absolutely necessary in relation to Commerce; it's most unjust and unreasonable that a man be compelled to employ a man in carriage of his Letters and Commodities, whom perhaps he hath found unfaithful (rather than another in whom he doth confide;) and shall a man be compelled rather to employ a man that intends to introduce Monopolies to the prejudice of the Nations in general, rather than him that hath ventured his pains and Estate for the relief of the Nations against so potent an Antagonist.

2. Is it not sufficient that the Duties of Excise and Custom be paid for the Commodities a man sends for? If not, then whether it be not more equal to add so much as the Inland Letters may be thought to be farmed at, to the publique Revenue, which would not signifie much; admit it should be 8000. l. by the year, which is more than any man can afford to give, except he be his own carver in all Letters and Pacquets except single; and what is such a sum, added to above two Millions, which is conceived to be the least of the publique income, one way or other? A publique Tax raiseth a certainty, all which doth, or ought to come to the publique Use; this causeth the Monopolizer under colour of paying his Rent, to hope to gain as much to himself as the first Farmer, of whom its credibly reported by Farming, both Offices (as now they are called) in two years onely he purcha-

purchased Lands of the yearly value of near 1000.l. in fee, which must cost more money then the people of these Nations concerned in commerce and correspondency, could well spare: Besides, Merchants and Handycrafts-men, deserve more encouragement then to have such a sum, or any sum added to all other impositions. Again, the same Reason may introduce the vilest and worst of Monopolies; for a man may as well be restrained in sending a Porter, or his own known servant with a Letter, or upon any Errand into the City or Countrey, either by Postages, or otherwise, without an Imposition upon every such occasion to the State. Also it hinders a man to be as civil as otherwise he would, or might be, in having, or returning an accompt to, or from his friend, many a man in these times being forced to set a greater value of 6.d. or 3.d. then of three times as much in former times, when money was more plentiful; & certainly any man but a Farmer wil confess it to be a strange imposition, that a man cannot have an accompt of the condition of his Wife or Family, without paying thrice as much as heneed; & it seems as unreasonable for a man to be forced to pay 3.d. for what may be done for a penny, (in relation to Letters) as for a man to be compelled to pay thrice as much for meat or any other commodity, as the price currant.

Obj. The carriage of Letters at the old rate, will yeild a considerable revenue to the publike, and a man payes freely for his Letters, for the most part being of beneficial concernment.

Ans. It's confessed that this is the greatest Argument, and onely considerable, but may receive this answer: If by this imposition all others were to be forborn, it were somewhat reasonable, but added to the whole revenue, inconsiderable, and its generally conceived, that the people had rather pay thrice as much other ways, being not so embittered by the payment in gross, as this way, which tends chiefly to the pinching or discouragement of the active Tradesman; and are they not the same just, equal, and legal wayes of raising this inconsiderable sum in respect of the whole) as of the rest.

¶ The second part of the objection is utterly deny'd, for though a man will willingly pay three-pence to have an account

count of his family, or business, rather than ~~wait~~ such an account; yet certainly no man will, or ever did willingly pay three-pence, for which he need pay but a penny.

And if for reasons of State Posts must be erected, certainly he is not the fittest man that will give the most money for it, but rather he that will undertake the service at the cheapest rate, which must be the best advantage to the Common-wealth, and its hoped, the present Counsellors of State will eye the good and ease of the Publick in this particular.

Obj B. In regard of the unsettledness of the Nations, the Carriage of Letters cannot securely be trusted with any, or every person.

S. A. It's very true, especially relating to the States Packets, which he pretends not to, however will be ready to carry them as faithfully as formerly (which for any thing he knows by himself, or ever heard, either of himself, or then Partners to the contrary, all the time of their undertaking, being for a year together was performed, as well to the content of the then Council of State, as all others concerned therein. However the Males may be delivered sealed to whom they shall be appointed and being brought to known places, (as now they are,) may be as lyable to inspection as any other, which with such other caution as is ready to be rendered, will be sufficient security.

If it be objected, That the Parliament hath power to make a Law for erecting of an Office, and to lay a restraint of others, and to reserve a Rent.

Ans. In Aug 1642. it was no Office, and the restraint then voted to be illegal, and against the Liberties of the people, there being no Act of Parliament (in which every mans consent is impyed) made since, it remains in it self free. And admit it shall be made an Office, it's hoped that that precious Law made 12. R. 2. C. 2. which saies, That none shall be put in Office by suit, or reward, but upon desert, may not be thought unworthy of being a president; and the business being of such importance to the people, it's submitted whether it ought to be disposed of by way of Farming, before a full and free Parliament convene, and by that time the Undertaker hopes to convince all unbiased persons of the unreasonableness of the farming of carriage of Letters.

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